

Message Text

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ACTION L-03

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 03138

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: TSPA, UR, CA
SUBJECT: COSMOS 954

REF: (A) MOSCOW 3032 (NOTAL), (B) STATE 36705 (NOTAL)

1. DURING MEETING WITH SCICOUNS WHICH WAS
PRIMARILY DEVOTED TO DISCUSSION OF UN OUTER SPACE LEGAL
SUBCOMMITTEE MATTERS, BORIS MAYORSKIY, CHIEF OF THE MFA
TREATY AND LEGAL DIVISION SECTION FOR BILATERAL
SPACE MATTERS, MADE SEVERAL REMARKS CONCERNING
THE COSMOS 954 INCIDENT. MAYORSKIY WAS EVASIVE ABOUT
WHETHER THE SOVIETS PLANNED TO REIMBURSE CANADA FOR COSTS
OF THE COSMOS 954 SEARCH AND CLEAN-UP OPERATIONS. HE
CONFIRMED THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE NOT ASKED FOR THE RETURN
OF THE REMNANTS OF COSMOS 954, AND NOTED THAT THE AGREEMENT
ON THE RETURN OF OBJECTS LAUNCHED INTO SPACE MERELY OBLIGES
THE LAUNCHING AUTHORITY TO REIMBURSE EXPENSES INCURRED
TO RECOVER AND RETURN THE SPACE OBJECT. MAYORSKIY ALSO
REMARKED THAT SOVIETS HAD OFFERED TO ASSIST CANADA IN
RECOVERY OF THE SATELLITE, BUT THE CANADIANS HAD PREFERRED
TO SEEK ASSISTANCE FROM THE US.

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2. MAYORSKIY STATED THE SOVIET VIEW THAT THE FALL OF
COSMOS 954 DID NOT JUSTIFY THE VEHEMENCE WITH WHICH THE
ISSUE OF THE USE OF NUCLEAR POWER SOURCES IN SPACE IS BEING
DISCUSSED IN THE UN OUTER SPACE S&T SUBCOMMITTEE.
MAYORSKIY CLAIMED THAT THE SOVIETS HAD TAKEN REASONABLE
SAFETY PRECAUTIONS WITH REGARD TO THE COSMOS 954. (HE

SAID IT HAD BEEN DESIGNED TO BURN UP COMPLETELY UPON REENTRY.) UNFORTUNATELY, IN THIS PARTICULAR INSTANCE THESE PRECAUTIONS HAD PROVEN UNAVAILING. MAYORSKIY CLAIMED THAT THE LIKELIHOOD OF A REPETITION OF THE INCIDENT OR OF ANY REAL HARM ARISING FROM THE USE OF NUCLEAR POWERED SATELLITES IN SPACE WAS EXCEEDINGLY SMALL. MAYORSKIY NOTED THAT THE SOVIETS ARE NOT OPPOSED TO THE DISCUSSION OF THE ISSUE; HOWEVER, THEY BELIEVE THAT CERTAIN COUNTRIES ARE PUSHING TOO RAPIDLY TOWARD ESTABLISHMENT OF SOME TYPE OF REGIME TO REGULATE THE USE OF NUCLEAR POWER IN SPACE. IN RESPONSE TO SCICOUNS'S QUERY, MAYORSKIY INDICATED THAT THREE TO FIVE YEARS OF STUDY MIGHT BE REQUIRED BEFORE ADOPTION OF SOME KIND OF REGULATORY REGIME COULD BE CONSIDERED. IN THIS CONNECTION, MAYORSKIY INQUIRED WHETHER PRESIDENT CARTER'S REMARK DURING HIS JANUARY PRESS CONFERENCE THAT THE US WOULD FAVOR AGREEMENT WITH THE USSR TO BAN THE USE OF NUCLEAR REACTORS IN EARTH ORBIT, WOULD ALSO EXTEND TO THE USE OF OTHER NUCLEAR POWER SOURCES, SUCH AS ISOTOPES. PLEASE ADVISE, UPON COMPLETION OF STUDY MENTIONED IN PARA 2 OF REF B.

3. COMMENT: MAYORSKIY'S POINTEDLY STRICT INTERPRETATION OF THE AGREEMENT ON THE RETURN OF OBJECTS FROM OUTER SPACE AND HIS REMARK ABOUT CANADIAN FAILURE TO ACCEPT SOVIET OFFER OF ASSISTANCE IN LOCATING THE COSMOS 954
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DEBRIS PROBABLY INDICATES THAT SOVIETS WILL TAKE A HARD LINE WITH RESPECT TO QUESTION OF REIMBURSING CANADA FOR COST OF COSMOS 954 SEARCH AND RECOVERY OPERATIONS. MATLCOK

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